

VZCZCXRO5221

RR RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM  
DE RUEHME #2682/01 2481235  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 041235Z SEP 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3141  
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE  
RUEAHLA/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
RHMFIUU/CDR USNORTHCOM  
RHMFIUU/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 002682

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: DEMONSTRATORS DEMAND GOM ACTION ON RISING LEVELS  
OF VIOLENT CRIMES

REF: MEXICO 2669

REFTEL: MEXICO 2669

SUBJECT: Demonstrators Demand GOM Action on Rising Levels of  
Violent Crimes

11. (SBU) Summary. Tens of thousands of Mexicans on marched  
in Mexico City on August 30 to protest rising levels of  
violence, with demonstrations taking place in over 80 other  
Mexican cities, as well as a number of U.S. cities. The  
demonstration was inspired by the recent kidnapping and  
murder of Fernando Marti, the 14 year-old son of prominent  
businessman Alejandro Marti. (See reftel.) Participants were  
not just protesting the rise in crime but also by what many  
see as the GOM's failure to address the issue. On August 31,  
the march's civil society organizers met with President  
Calderon to present their own crime-fighting proposals. End  
Summary.

Impressive Turn Out at Anti-Crime Demonstration

12. (SBU) Although the demonstration commenced in heavy rain,  
most observers estimated that it was as large if not larger  
than the last major anti-crime march in 2004. According to  
some observers, over 300,000 people took part in the 2004  
"March of Silence." The editorial director of Mexico City  
newspaper El Universal, who took part in both marches,  
estimated that this year's march was larger than the 2004  
march and noted that this was the fourth big anti-crime march  
in the past 11 years. Alejandro Marti said he was satisfied  
with the August 30 demonstration, "Illuminemos Mexico" (Let's  
light up Mexico).

Growing Skepticism of GOM's Crime Strategy

13. (SBU) The march was inspired by the recent kidnapping and  
murder of Fernando Marti, the 14 year-old son of prominent  
businessman Alejandro Marti. Participants were not only  
outraged by the rise in crime but also by what many see as  
the GOM's failure to address the issue. According to a  
survey published by Mexico City newspaper El Universal August  
22, 81% of respondents stated that insecurity has increased  
and 59% judged that the federal government's response so far  
has failed to check this rise. Just over a third of those  
polled blamed the impunity enjoyed by criminals on "the  
inefficiency and corruption of the judges"; another third  
blamed the police.

14. (SBU) Another leading Mexico City newspaper, La Reforma,  
collated a mass of official data to make the same point. It  
noted that, over the past decade, the public security budgets  
had increased by 565% and that police forces had  
substantially increased their strength (the federal police by  
51% between 1999 and 2007, the Federal Investigation Agency  
(AFI) by almost 100% over the past six years). The federal  
public security ministry doubled its budget since 2000 to the  
equivalent of \$1.9 billion; the office of the federal chief  
prosecutor (PGR) by 94% over the past decade, to about \$918  
million. All told, the country now has 516,000 police  
officers, or 4.8 for every 1,000 inhabitants.

¶5. (SBU) Despite this effort, noted Reforma, the number of reported kidnappings rose by 45% over the past five years, and between 2006 and 2007 the number of crimes increased by 8.6%. In Mexico City alone, in 2007, there were on average 250 holdups and four murders a day.

¶6. (SBU) Two separate surveys published by Reforma August 27 and September 1 (conducted just before the August 21 Crime Summit ) see reftel for more on the Crime Summit) shows a wide-ranging pattern of decline in public approval ratings. The August 27 poll shows that since March 2007, the armed forces have seen their approval rating fall from 70% to 63%, the Supreme Court from 49% to 40%, the Chamber of Deputies from 34% to 24%, the Senate from 36% to 24%, and political parties from 27% to 22%. Moreover, only 36% of respondents declared themselves satisfied with the way the democratic system is functioning in Mexico. Although the September 1 Reforma poll shows that Calderon's approval rating of 62% is down only 3 percentage points since September 2007, 38% of those polled believe that he has been the least effective in the area of security ) his Administration's top priority ) while 22% said the economy.

#### Civil Society Presents Security Proposals

¶7. (SBU) Following the march, President Calderon met with 14 civic leaders who presented their own ten point plan of 10 actions to improve security. Calderon agreed to adopt several proposals of their plan, most of which are in line with the security pact adopted at last month's Crime Summit (see reftel). Among the measures are the creation of a citizens' panel to monitor government progress in fighting crime, better police recruiting and oversight systems, and equipping police with more powerful weapons. Calderon offered

MEXICO 00002682 002 OF 002

few details about the proposed panel ) the Citizens' Institute of Social and Criminal Prevention ) but members of the 14 civic groups told reporters the president promised a concrete plan within a month.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) The public clamor over rising levels of violent crime in Mexico, as evidenced by recently published polls and this past weekend's march, is bringing the Calderon administration under pressure to take action that evinces a greater sense of urgency and produce results that deliver the general population a greater sense of security. This began with a shake-up of the federal Attorney General's Office (PGR), continued with the launching of special anti-kidnapping units, and culminated in the first full meeting of the national public security council, where a cross-section of leaders reached agreement on a 75-point strategy to combat organized crime. Reinforcing these actions, Calderon emphasized security as his administration's top priority in his message as part of his Second State of the Union Address (see septel). &We will not rest until you feel safe in the city where you live,8 he said. Arguably, increased crime violence, particularly among the drug cartels, are a sign that the tougher security measures are hitting a nerve. Further, to be fair, reforming Mexico's security and its judicial system, clearly prerequisites for addressing the Mexico's crime challenge, will take time given inherent political, bureaucratic, and institutional resistance. Nevertheless, as Mexico struggles to turn the page on the crime threat it faces and citizens grow impatient with the time it is taking, we can expect the debate over crime to take on significant political overtones. Visit Mexico City's Classified Web Site at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/mexicocity> and the North American Partnership Blog at <http://www.intelink.gov/communities/state/nap> / GARZA